

PJH

MEMORANDUM FOR THE BOARD

VIA: Acting Chief, Estimates Staff

SUBJECT: Some considerations concerning Soviet expansion
(Reference NIE-25)

FROM: [REDACTED] 25X1A

1. In general terms, the motivations for Soviet expansionism

can be divided into three categories: (1) a desire for security for
the Soviet system, (2) a desire for material gain and power, and (3) a
desire, based on ideological grounds, to further "communism" throughout
the world. The element of opportunism is probably applicable in all
cases but would be of particular importance in the second and third
categories. In appraising possible future Soviet moves, it is essential
that the relative weight of these three factors in the Kremlin's
deliberations be established, otherwise, such an appraisal is in danger
of reaching seriously misleading conclusions. The overemphasis of one

factor at the expense of the other two could easily lead to errors in
evaluating the relative degree of danger in given areas and result in
an unbalanced disposition of US resources. To illustrate this problem
some considerations concerning each of the three factors are presented

below:

a) Soviet expansion for reasons of security. There appears to be little question that the Soviet concept of security ultimately requires a system of states in the Soviet image and under the central control of the Kremlin. In striving for this goal, however, Soviet security interests can best be envisaged as a series of concentric rings beginning at the Kremlin itself and extending through the territory of the USSR, the Soviet orbit, and eventually to the Communist parties outside Soviet territorial control. Obviously, Soviet flexibility, i.e., the willingness to take various risks, increases as the Kremlin's deliberations proceed from the center to the outer circles. To accept this concept as the sole or principal motivation for Soviet expansion implies a system of priorities for Soviet or Soviet-inspired expansion based on "soft spots" in the system of security "rings." Applying this reasoning to the situation in June of 1950, Yugoslavia or Iran, rather than Korea, would have probably appeared to be the danger spots.

b) Soviet expansion for material gain. Soviet exploitation of the satellite states testifies to the importance of this factor in Soviet

~~TOP SECRET~~

expansion. Also, it can be argued that such exploitation has been pressed at times at the expense of security considerations. Economic relations played an important role in the Tito-Moscow rift and it is not unreasonable to suppose that the break could have been suppressed for some time, if not avoided, had the Kremlin pursued a less patently exploitative policy. It should also be noted that economic problems play an important role in current Eastern European purges. Many of the purgees are apparently loyal Communist administrators caught between the necessities, on the one hand, of meeting exorbitant Soviet demands, and on the other, of maintaining a working economy. This factor, as the principle motivation for expansion would permit a high degree of flexibility, including retreat if necessary, and would imply a high degree of concentration on, and a great variety of tactics concerning, the richest target areas. Using this factor as the sole or principal criterion in assessing Soviet post-war policy for example, an estimate might well have been reached that the USSR would press for a share of Ruhr production even at the price of relaxing the Soviet grip on Eastern Germany.

~~TOP SECRET~~

c) Soviet expansion for ideological reasons. This factor is probably the most difficult one to judge because the ideological argument permeates the entire Soviet system and undoubtedly influences, in various ways, all of the actions and reactions of the Soviet Union. The basic ideology has from time to time, been so warped and remodeled to conform to a given situation, that a number, if not the majority, of observers have concluded that the ideological aspects of Communism are being used exclusively for the enhancement of Soviet power. If such is the case, ideological considerations are not of critical importance as a motivation for Soviet expansion, but are of great importance as a vehicle for such expansion. If, on the other hand, one accepts the thesis that the leaders of the USSR are fanatically devoted to spreading the Communist gospel for the sake of the faith, it is difficult, if not impossible, for example, to explain their failure to move into Finland following World War II.

2. If the above considerations are valid, Soviet expansion is apparently motivated by a combination of these factors and their relative importance varies with each individual situation. Thus, in a given situation, the value of the prize might outweigh considerations of security (for

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

-5-

example, possible intervention in Iran despite the risks of war), the strategic importance of the area to the security of the USSR and the orbit might be decisive (for example, a possible attack on Yugoslavia and Greece), or the "ripeness" of a situation might invite Soviet exploitation (viz, Indo China).

~~TOP SECRET~~